

BATMAN

DOUG
MOENCH
JIM
APARO



THE FREEDOM OF MADNESS!

OPEN
FIRE!

BRAM BRAM
BRAM
BRAM BRAM

SPANG

CHEOW

ZANG

ZING

RRRRRRRRRR

BATMAN
CREATED BY
BOB
KANE

DOUG
MOENCH
WRITER

JIM
APARO
ARTIST

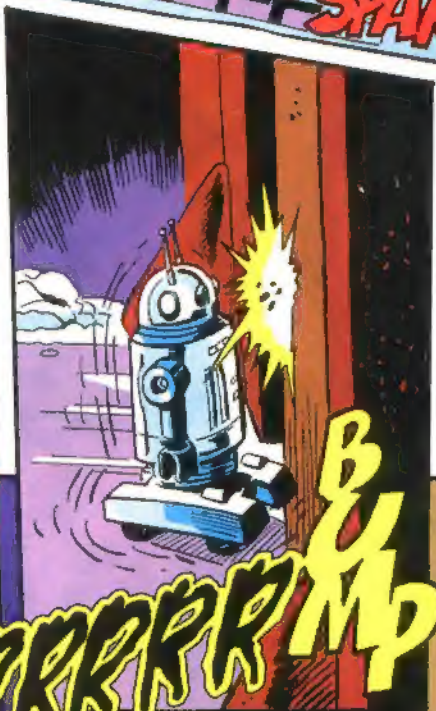
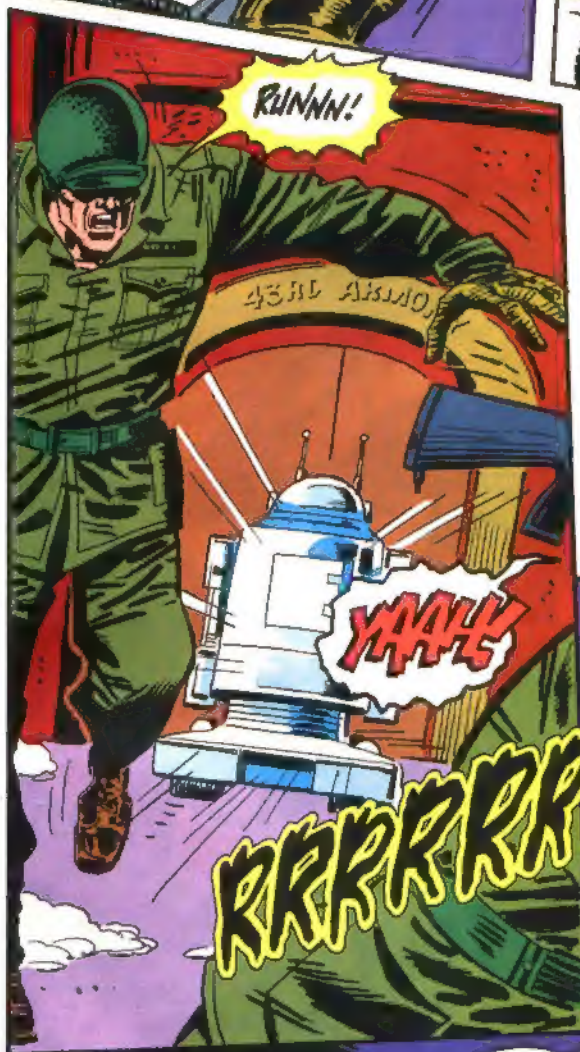
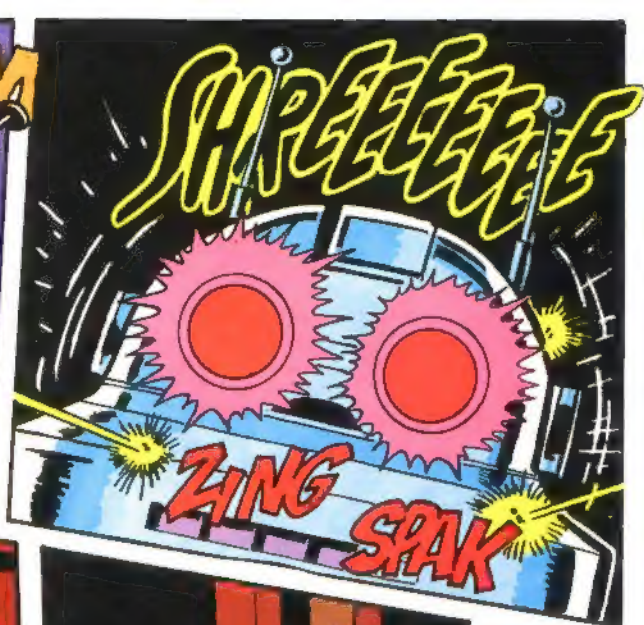
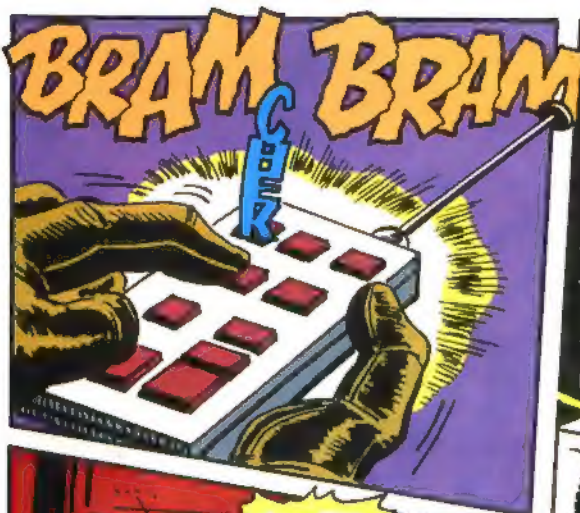
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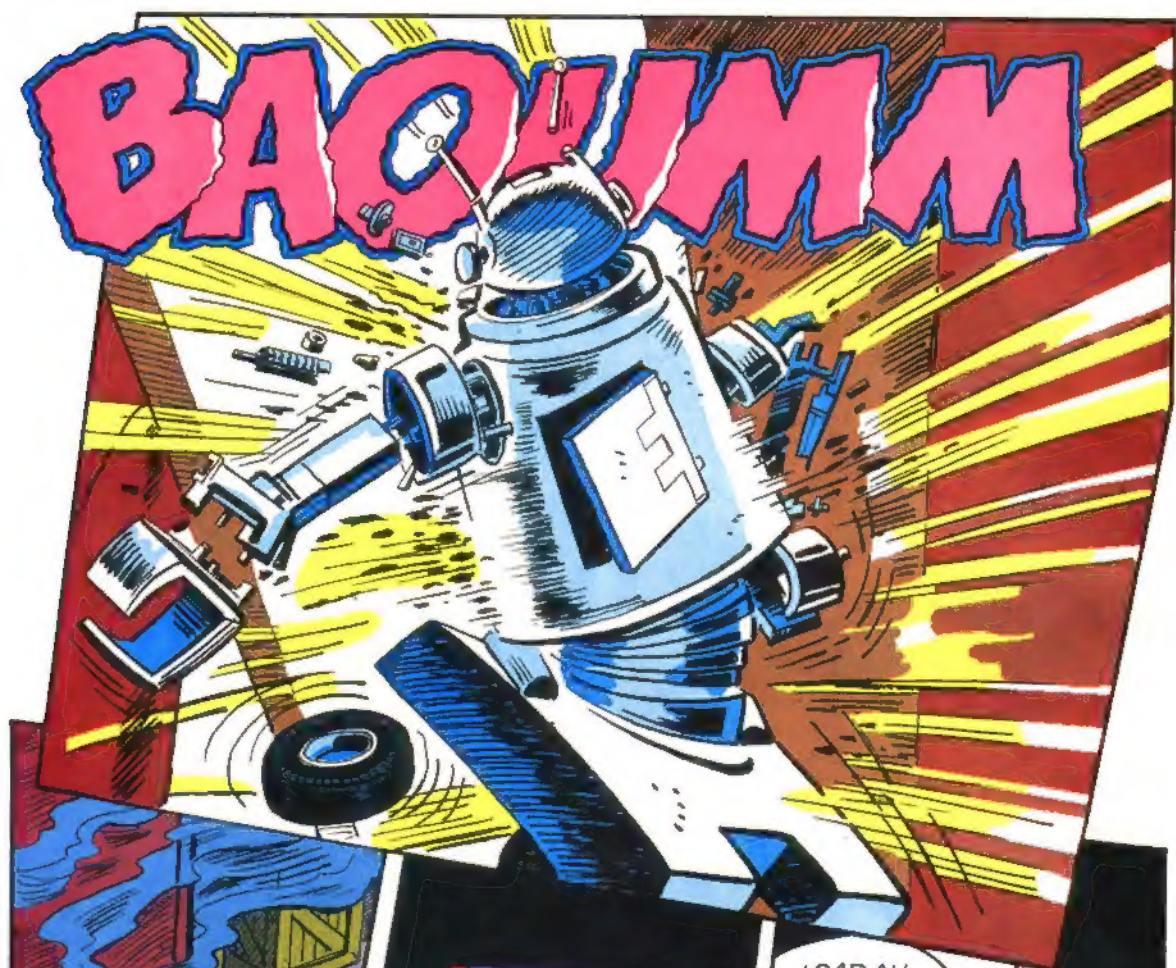
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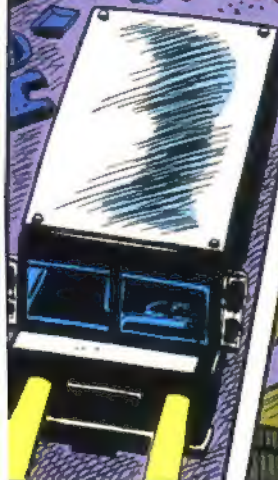


BAOUMM



KRM

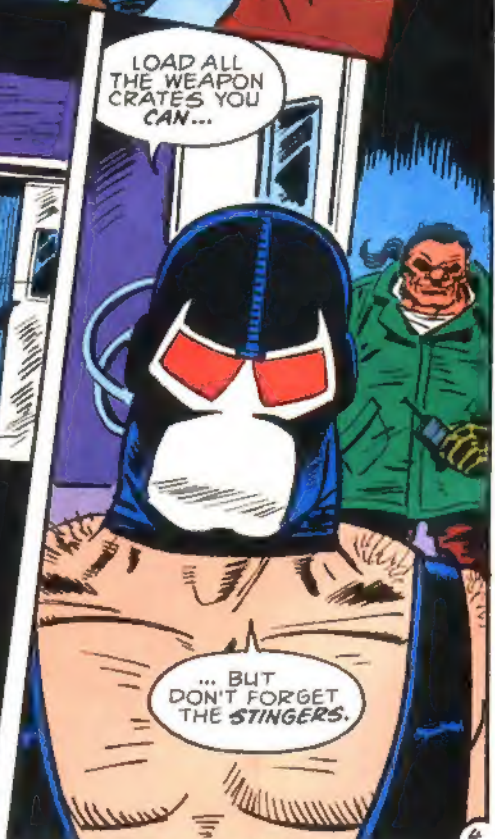
SKETCH



FIVE
MINUTES
MAXIMUM...



LOAD ALL
THE WEAPON
CRATES YOU
CAN...



... BUT
DON'T FORGET
THE STINGERS.

POLICE
H.Q.:

IT'S LIKE
AN ORDNANCE
INVENTORY FOR
WORLD WAR
THREE,
COMMISH...

AUTOMATIC ASSAULT
RIFLES, ANTI-
PERSONNEL MINES,
MORTARS, HEAVY
MACHINEGUNS,
FRAGMENTATION
GRENADES...

PIZZA KITCHEN
...AN' EVEN
A FEW CRATES O'
SHOULDER-LAUNCHED
STINGER MISSILES.

AND THE
ONLY BRIGHT
SIDE IS THAT
NO ONE WAS
HURT...

NOT AFTER
THE ARMORY GUARDS
RAN AWAY FROM THEIR U.F.O
MONSTER... BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME
THERE'S STILL A BODY COUNT TO COME.

THEN YOU THINK THOSE
MUNITIONS WERE STOLEN
FOR DOMESTIC USE,
MONTAYA?

WITH THAT M.O.
COMMISSIONER, I
DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO THINK...

MY GUESS IS
NICARAGUA --
ROGUE C.I.A
ELEMENTS.

...BUT ONE THING'S READY
FOR THE BANK -- THAT WAS
A WHOLE TRUCKLOAD OF
MIGHTY EXOTIC WEAPONRY...

...AND RIGHT
NOW IT'S LOOSE
ON OUR STREETS!

YES...

...BUT
IN WHOSE
HANDS?

WE START BY HITTING THE VIOLENT WARDS HERE AT THE CENTER OF THE ROUNDHOUSE...

THE FIRST HIT WILL BE RELATIVELY LIGHT, JUST ENOUGH TO BREACH THE ROOF AND A FEW OF THE CELLS -- BUT THE SECOND HIT WILL BE HEAVY, TAKING OUT SECURITY AND SEALING THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND INMATES.

WE'VE CERTAINLY GOT THE FIREPOWER FOR IT.

... AND WE FOLLOW WITH A HIT ON MAIN SECURITY -- HERE.

BUT WHICH CELL DO WE OPEN FIRST? WHO CAN LEAD THE OTHERS -- INSPIRE THEM WITH HIS OWN VIOLENCE AND MADNESS?

I THINK I MAY HAVE A SUGGESTION, BANE...

AND BELIEVE ME, HE'S A REAL RIOT!

The incessant laughter alone, echoing through dark steel corridors, is enough to make one doubt the very existence of sanity...

ARKHAM ASYLUM
NORTH
ELEVATION

Add to that all the shrieks and whimpers, the snarls and whispers, all the cunning drool-garbled incantations of paranoia and revenge, and one sees that this is NOT, in fact, an ASYLUM.

It is, simply and unarguably, a MADHOUSE.

ARKHAM ASYLUM
FOR THE CRIMINALLY MINDED

NOT, in fact, an ASYLUM.
It is, simply and unarguably, a MADHOUSE.

And if one is the keeper and controller of such a place, or merely the KING of the MAD?
Indeed, one won

to
ks and
pers, all the
incantations
and one sees

Indeed, one wonders if madness might not be INFECTIOUS in a certain sense, a contagion by virtue of its omnipresent influence, so much more vivid and strident than the mundane, smothering cloak of so-called normalcy.

They have become my world, echoing down steel corridors to enter my MIND-- where they echo, now, even LOUDER...

If so, then surely I have been infected by now, for the laughter and shrieks, the canny gasps from the gloom, are the voices with which I live, here in Arkham, here in the madhouse of my making.

...clamoring to get out.

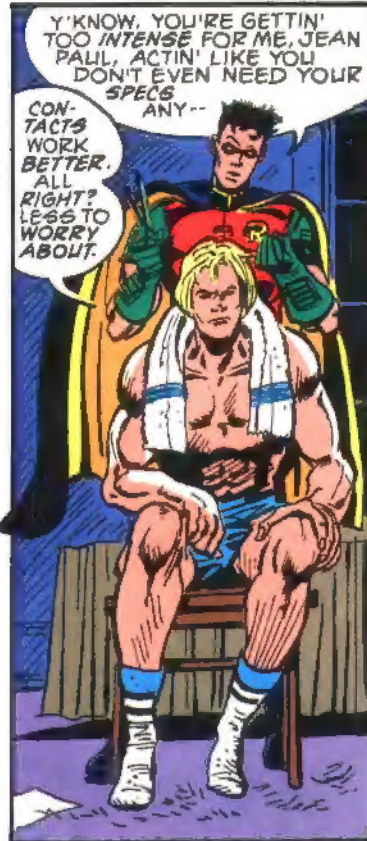
REAL SHORT?

I WANT IT OFF-- OUT OF THE WAY.

YOU GOT IT.

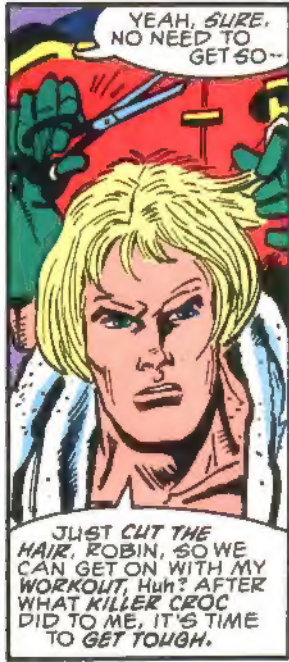
NO, I DON'T, NOT YET, BUT I WILL GET IT.

SHKKT



Y'KNOW, YOU'RE GETTIN' TOO INTENSE FOR ME, JEAN PAUL. ACTIN' LIKE YOU DON'T EVEN NEED YOUR SPECS ANY--

CONTACTS WORK BETTER. ALL RIGHT? LESS TO WORRY ABOUT.



YEAH, SURE. NO NEED TO GET SO--

JUST CUT THE HAIR, ROBIN. SO WE CAN GET ON WITH MY WORKOUT. HUH? AFTER WHAT KILLER CROC DID TO ME, IT'S TIME TO GET TOUGH.



YOU'RE CERTAIN THAT'S HIS CELL?

POSITIVE, BANE -- THIRD UNIT IN THE VIOLENT WARD...

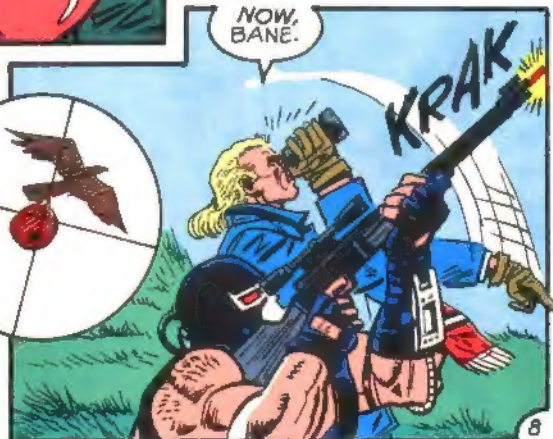
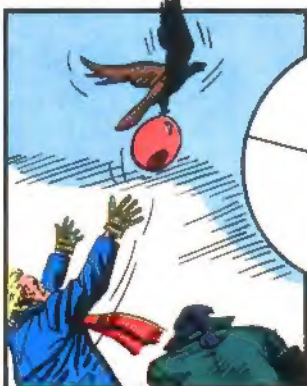


GOT IT FROM THE SAME FORMER GUARD WE PAID OFF TO ACQUIRE THE BLUEPRINTS... AND EVEN IF THE SHOT'S NOT PERFECT, YOU'RE BOUND TO BREACH ONE OF THE VIOLENT CELLS.

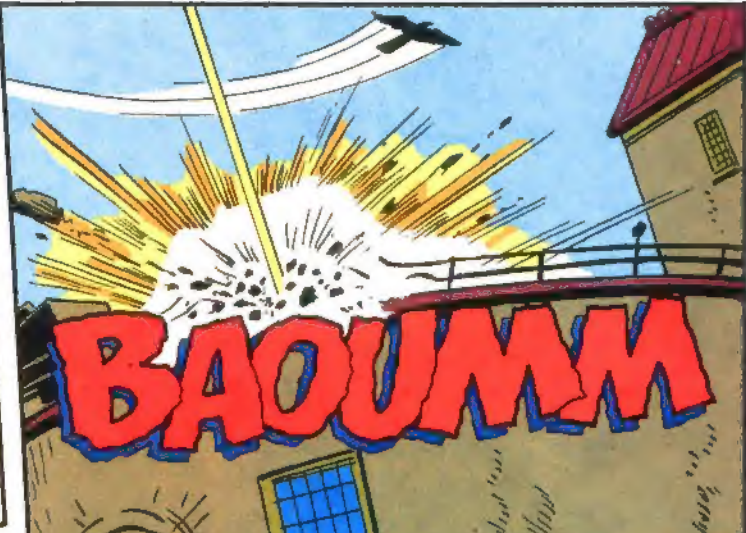
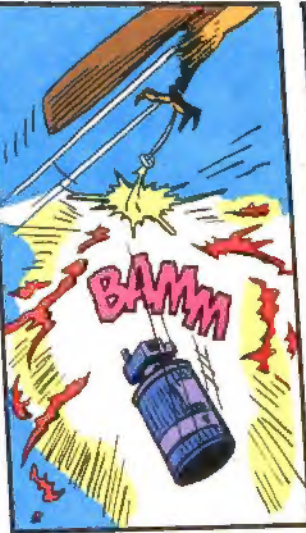
I'LL MAKE IT PERFECT.

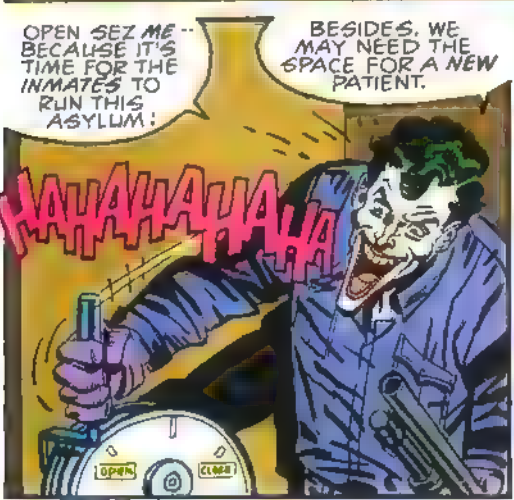
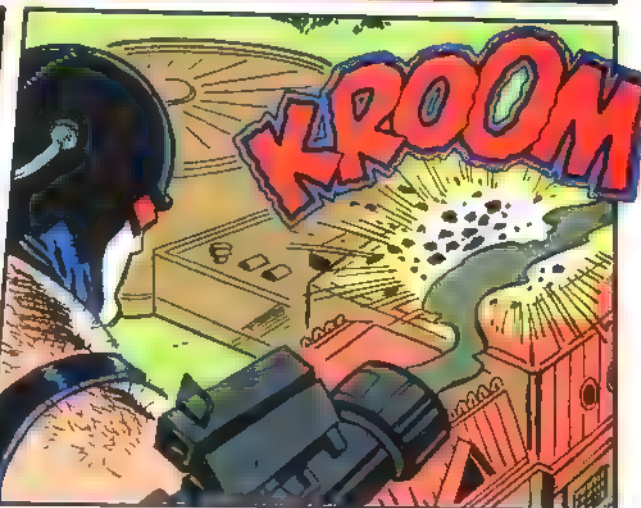
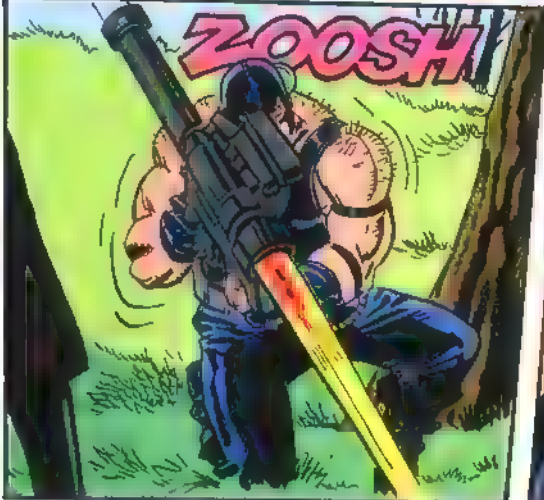


NITRO'S READY.



NOW, BANE.







KAKROOM



THEY'RE COMING
OUT INTO THE YARD,
TROGG...

DROP
THE
PRESENTS.

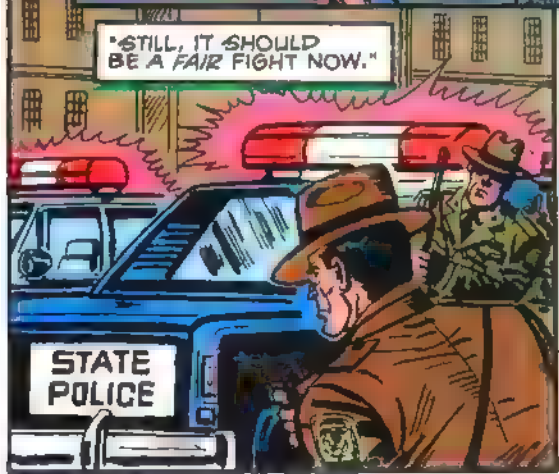
CRATES
GOING
OUT NOW.



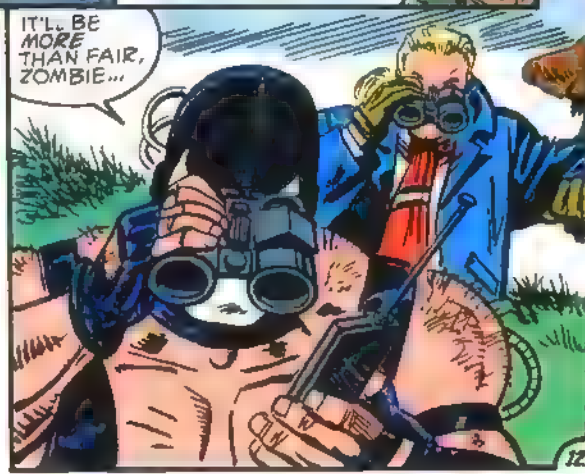
ZOMBIE
TO BANE:
PRESENTS
DELIVERED...



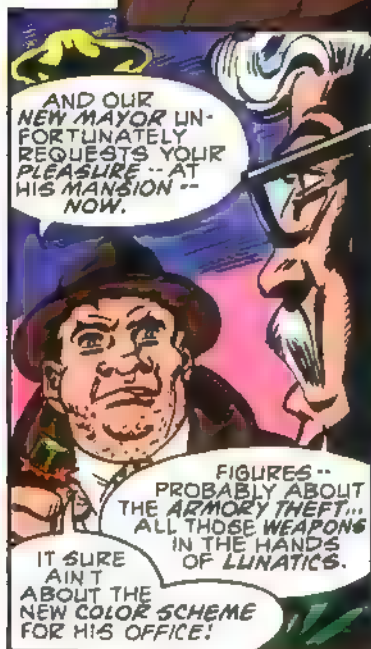
...BUT THE
STATE POLICE HAVE
ARRIVED - ENTERING
THE GROUNDS NOW...



"STILL, IT SHOULD
BE A FAIR FIGHT NOW."

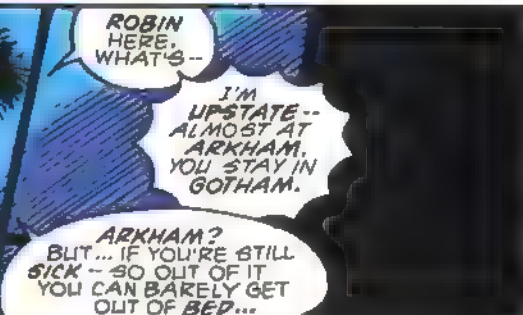


IT'LL BE
MORE
THAN FAIR,
ZOMBIE...





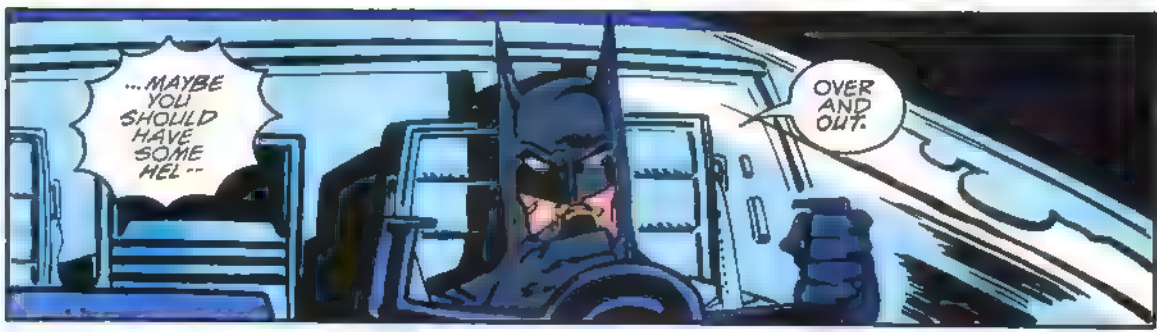
...EIGHTY-TWO... EIGHTY-THREE...



ROBIN HERE, WHAT'S--

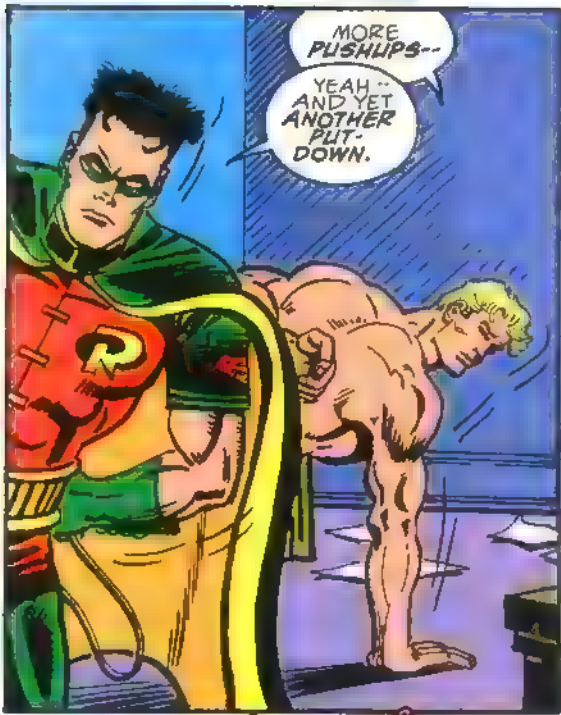
I'M UPSTATE-- ALMOST AT ARKHAM. YOU STAY IN GOTHAM.

ARKHAM? BUT... IF YOU'RE STILL SICK -- SO OUT OF IT YOU CAN BARELY GET OUT OF BED...



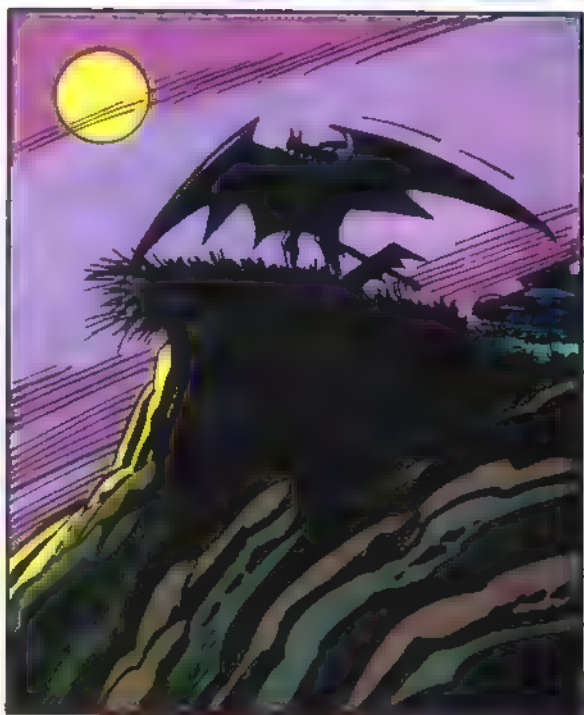
...MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE SOME HEL--

OVER AND OUT.



MORE PUSHUPS--

YEAH -- AND YET ANOTHER PUT-DOWN.



BRKAKAKAKA

SPANG

SO WHEN DO WE GET TO RETURN FIRE?

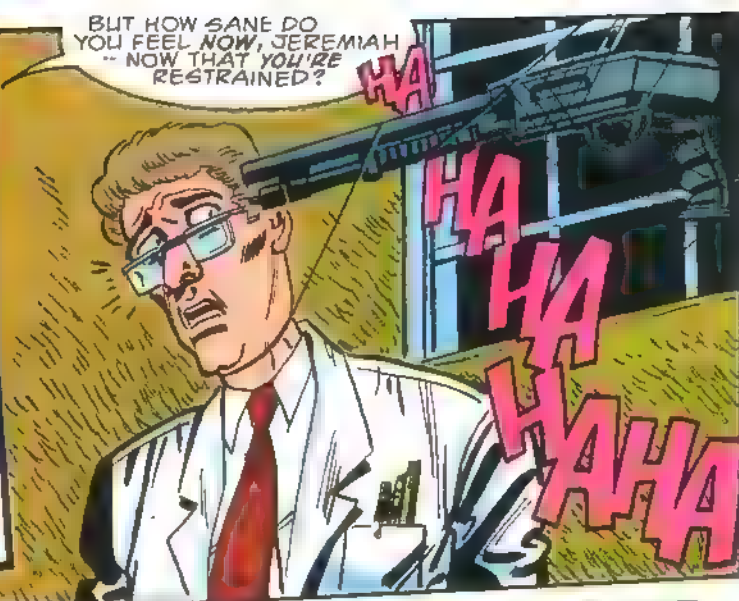
CKOON

SPANG

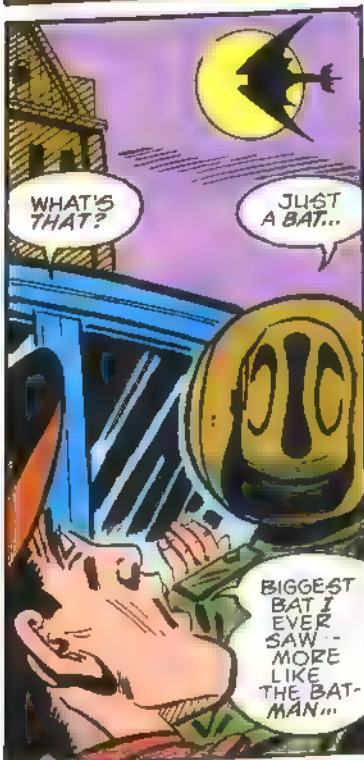
MAYBE NEVER -- AS LONG AS THEY'VE GOT HOSTAGES IN THERE.



IN PLACE OF OUR MAD-
NESS, JEREMIAH, YOU
GAVE US RESTRAINT AND
CALLED IT A PRODUCT OF
YOUR SANITY



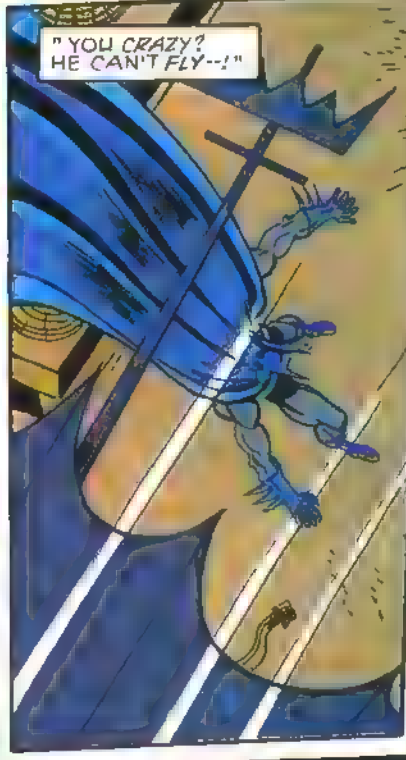
BUT HOW SANE DO
YOU FEEL NOW, JEREMIAH
-- NOW THAT YOU'RE
RESTRAINED?



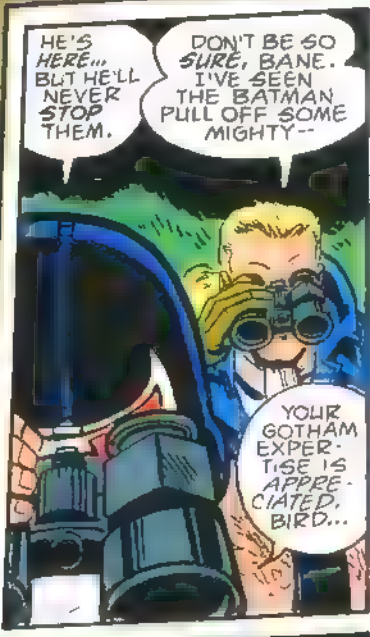
WHAT'S
THAT?

JUST
A BAT...

BIGGEST
BAT I
EVER
SAW --
MORE
LIKE
THE BAT-
MAN...



"YOU CRAZY?
HE CAN'T FLY--!"



HE'S
HERE...
BUT HE'LL
NEVER
STOP
THEM.

DON'T BE SO
SURE, BANE.
I'VE SEEN
THE BATMAN
PULL OFF SOME
MIGHTY--

YOUR
GOTHAM
EXPER-
TISE IS
APPRE-
CIATED,
BIRD...

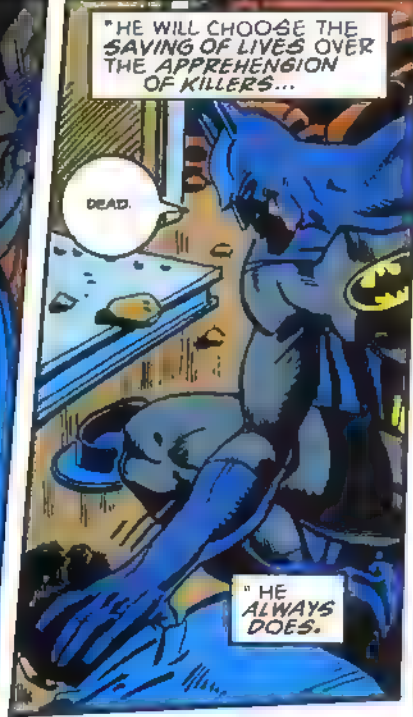


... BUT
I KNOW THIS
MAN... I HAVE
BEEN CLOSE
TO HIM.

I HAVE
SMELLED
WHAT
HE IS...



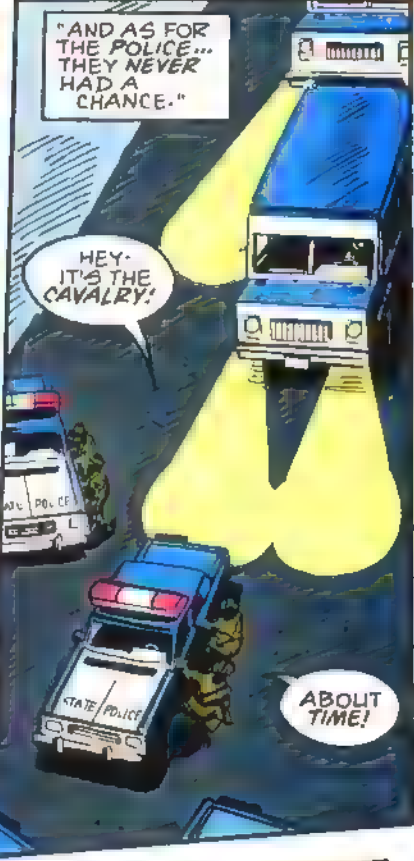
EVEN IF HE COULD STOP THEM, HE WON'T.



"HE WILL CHOOSE THE SAVING OF LIVES OVER THE APPREHENSION OF KILLERS..."

DEAD.

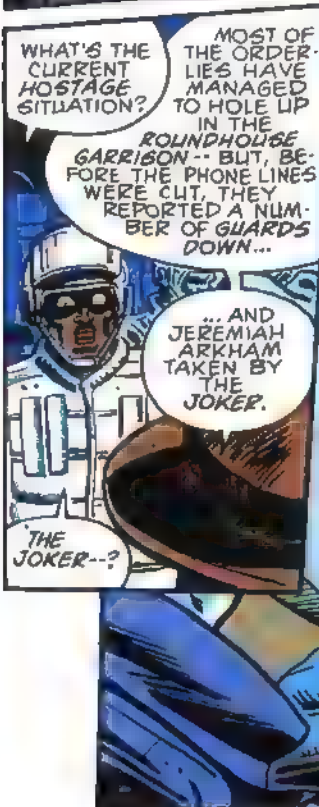
"HE ALWAYS DOES."



"AND AS FOR THE POLICE... THEY NEVER HAD A CHANCE."

HEY- IT'S THE CAVALRY!

ABOUT TIME!

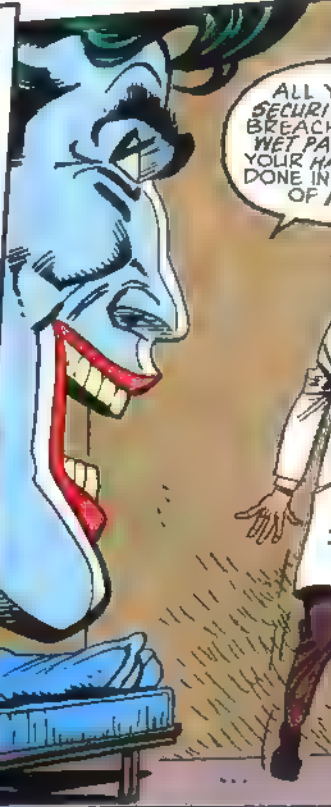


WHAT'S THE CURRENT HOSTAGE SITUATION?

MOST OF THE ORDERLIES HAVE MANAGED TO HOLE UP IN THE ROUNDHOUSE GARRISON -- BUT, BEFORE THE PHONE LINES WERE CUT, THEY REPORTED A NUMBER OF GUARDS DOWN...

... AND JEREMIAH ARKHAM TAKEN BY THE JOKER.

THE JOKER--?



" THEN GOD HELP HIM. "

ALL YOUR NEW SECURITY, JEREMIAH, BREACHED LIKE A WET PAPER BAG... ALL YOUR HARD WORK, UNDONE IN A TWINKLING OF FRENZY.

I LIKE THE WORD "TWINKLING," DON'T YOU? WERE YOU HARD TO POTTY TRAIN, JEREMIAH?

DOESN'T MATTER -- BECAUSE EVERYTHING YOU'VE TRAINED FOR, EVERYTHING YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED, IS SHATTERED...



... JUST LIKE YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW, JEREMIAH-- SHATTERED.

HAHAHA

HOW'D THEY GET
OUT INTO THE YARD?
WHAT HAPPENED
TO THE WALL?

NEAR AS WE CAN
FIGURE... SOME
KIND OF SMART
MISSILES.

MISSILES?
BUT WHO THE--?

"WE DON'T KNOW... BUT OBVIOUSLY
SOMEONE A LOT BETTER EQUIPPED
THAN SADDAM HUSSEIN."

ALREADY DISPATCHED
FIVE OF OUR TACTICAL
UNITS, MR. MAYOR, TO
ASSIST THE STATE
POLICE ON THE
SCENE...



... BUT WITH THE
HOSTAGE SITUATION,
I DON'T KNOW WHAT
ANY COP COULD --

I
CERTAINLY
HOPE
THEY'VE
BEEN TOLD
TO SHOOT
TO KILL.

IT DOESN'T WORK
THAT WAY MAYOR
KROL. MY MEN DIS-
CHARGE THEIR FIRE-
ARMS ONLY TO
DEFEND THEM-
SELVES --
OR
OTHERS.

THEN
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE
A LOT OF DEAD MEN,
GORDON -- SOME-
THING I DO NOT WANT
DURING MY
ADMINISTRATION.

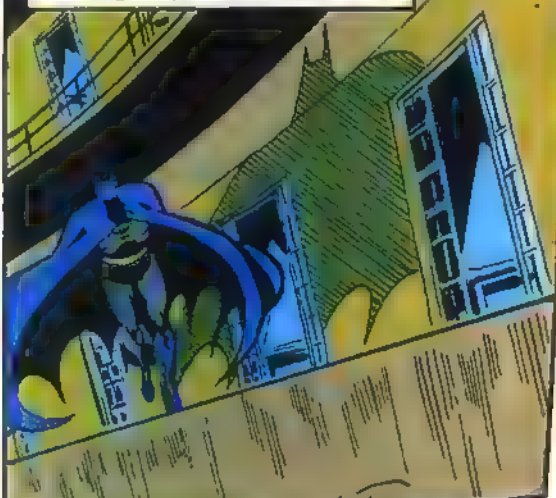
I RAN ON A
LAW AND ORDER
PLATFORM -- AND
NOW THAT I'VE BEEN
ELECTED, I'M NOT
ABOUT TO ABANDON
EVERYTHING I STAND FOR.

YOU RAN
UNOPPOSED

EVEN
MORE PROOF
OF MY
MANDATE!

PROOF
OF YOUR
MACHINE..

"...AND THAT'S WHAT WE NEED NOW -- NOT A FIREFIGHT, BUT ONE MAN, ON THE INSIDE, FUNCTIONING LIKE A MACHINE."

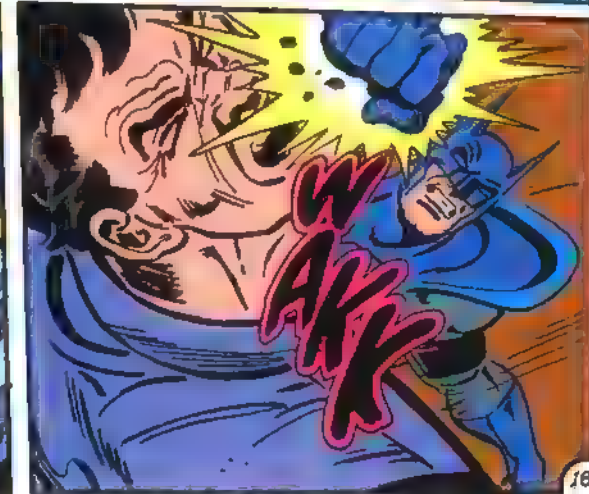
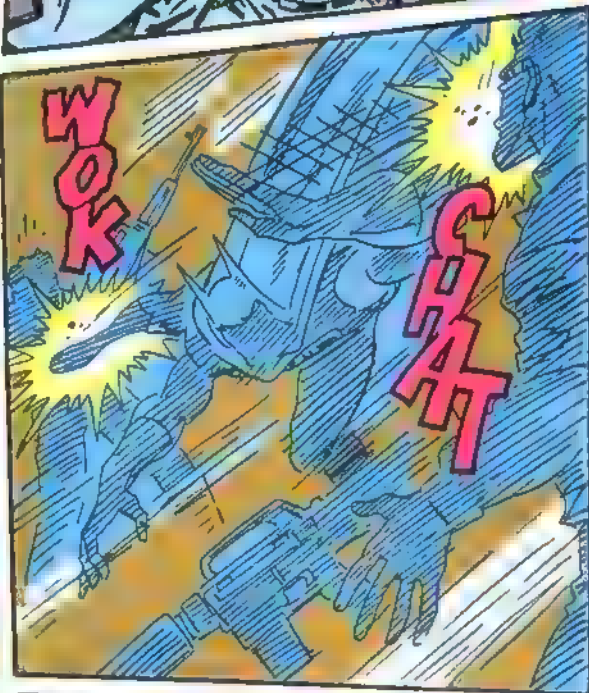


THEY'RE COMING... THEY'VE GOT CONTROL OF THE LOCKDOWN STATION... NO WAY TO KEEP THEM OUT...

MY GOD, THEY HATE US... WE'RE DEAD... WE'RE FRIGGIN' --



WHAT THE--?



TAKE THE WEAPONS AND STAY HERE.

I'LL LOCK YOU IN.

YOU BEEFED UP SECURITY AND WHAT DID YOU GET, HAH? THE BEEFIEST BREAKOUT OF MADNESS IN ARKHAM'S HISTORY!

AND SOON YOUR OWN MADNESS WILL BREAK OUT, JEREMIAH, RIGHT OUT OF YOUR SHATTERED SKULL -- JUST AS SOON AS THOSE KNEES WEAKEN!

"BUT YOU'LL ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF MADNESS, JEREMIAH!"

TRUST ME! MADNESS IS THE ONLY FREEDOM -- AND ALL THE MADNESS ONCE RESTRAINED UNDER YOUR STRICT CONTROL WILL SOON BE FREE TO RUN WILL'D!

HA HA HA

CHAK

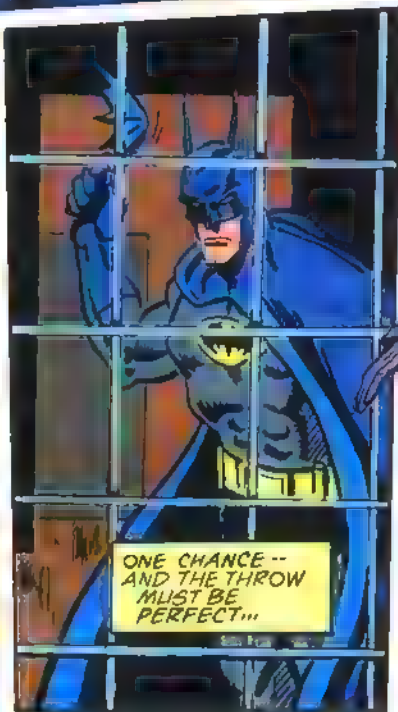
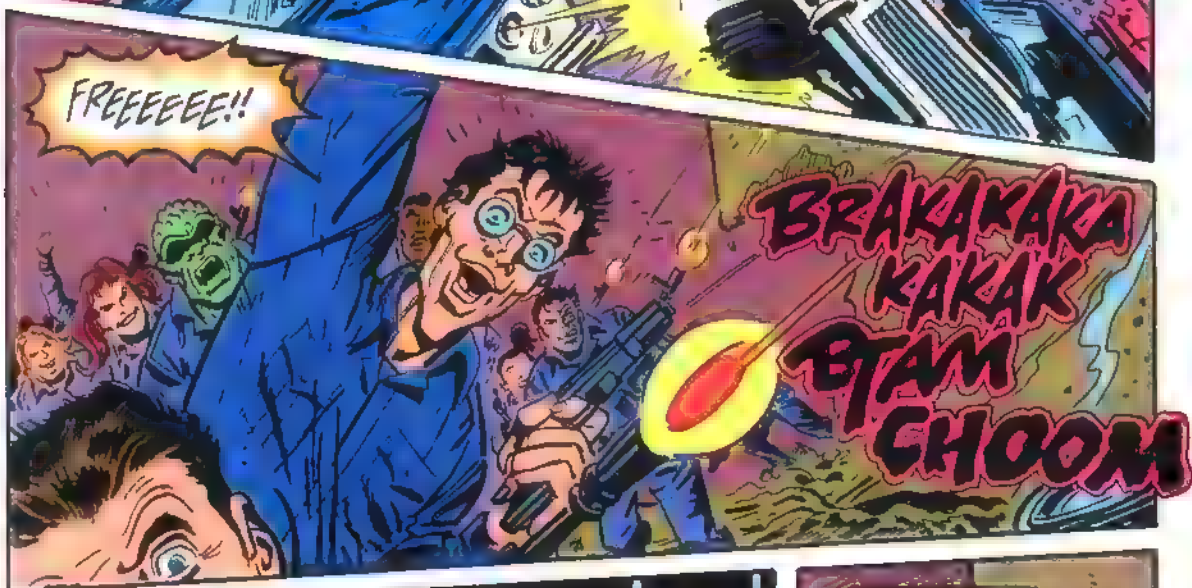
YMMMM

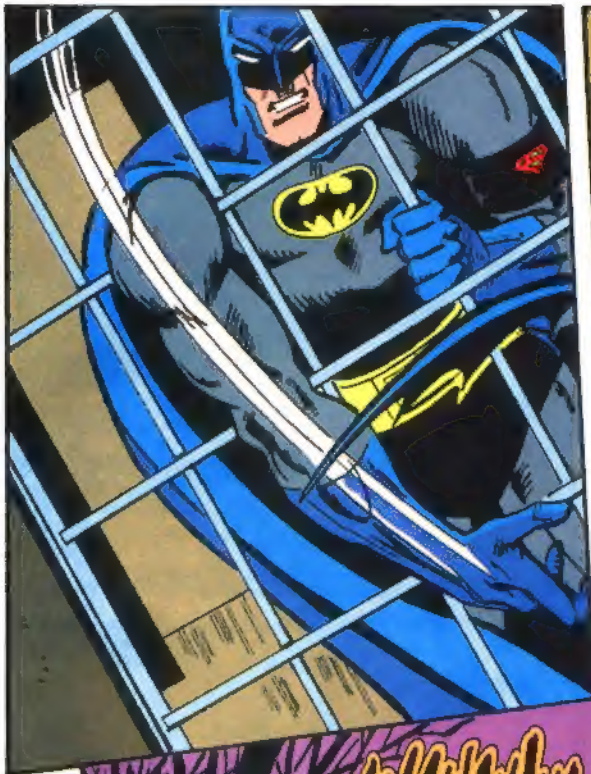
TIME TO END IT -- GET THEM OUT OF HERE!!!

NOW!

ZOOSH

ZOOSH





...THEY'RE
FREE...

NEEYAHYAHYAHYAH AIEEEEE
ARAWOOOO
YAAHAYAH

...ALL OF
THEM...



...EXCEPT
ONE...

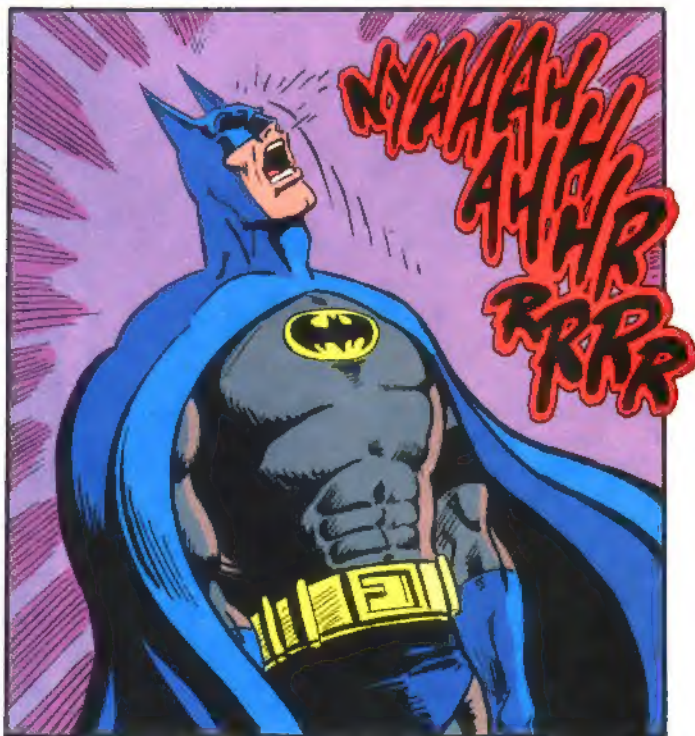
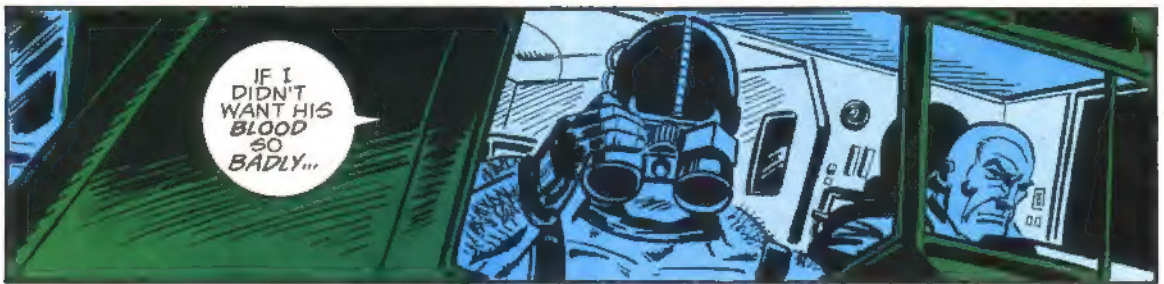
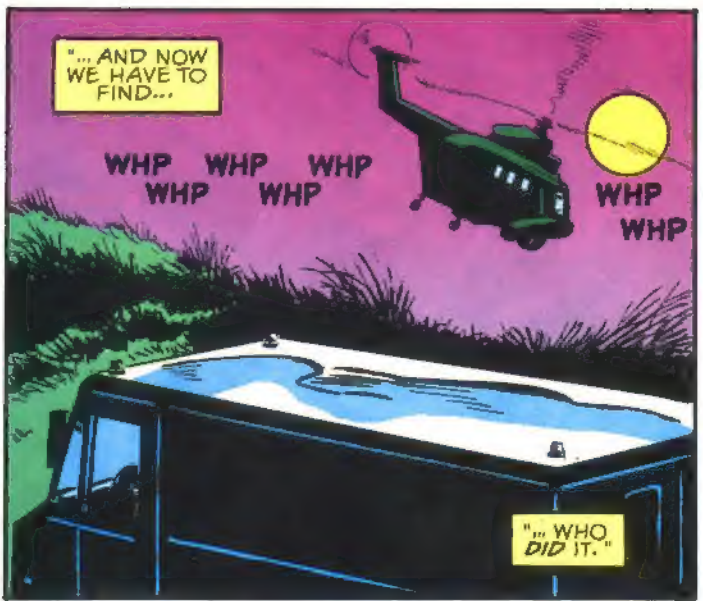
FREE...I'M
F-FREEEE...heh...
ha...ha...ha...
heh.

THEIR
KEEPER.



IT WAS SAFER ON
THE INSIDE, COMMISH
... ALL HOSTAGES
SAVED BUT SEVENTEEN
MEN DOWN ON THE
OUTSIDE ... SIX OF
'EM OURS ... NONE
OF 'EM INMATES.

THEY'RE
ALL LOOSE...
RUNNIN' WILD
LIKE A
PACK O'
MAD DOGS.



BAT-SIGNALS

Big Announcement/Tease

What a time to come on board the best line of comics in the world! Over the past couple months, while settling into my new assistant editor position, Denny, Scott—who is now a full Editor—and I have been working like ducks (uh, that's "dogs," Buford) on a major surprise. Several, really.

First, three facts: 1) The Batman titles arguably claim the best writers and artists working in the comics business today; 2) These creators are working on the all-time greatest characters in the comics biz; and 3) the big five-oh-oh of this title is fast approaching. Put the facts together and what do you get?

We put the challenge to our creators: build a storyline worthy of your immense collective genius, one that will irrevocably shake up the status quo, something so big that it will encompass most of our existing Bat-books—or more (hint hint)—to tell it.

Their reaction? Try to hold us back!

Thus begins "Knightfall." This epic will not be told in a graphic novel. It will not be found in a miniseries. No, the action will be right here, every month in BATMAN, in DETECTIVE and—very soon—in, shall we say, "other" monthly books.

Batman is going where he has never been before...be prepared.

Dear Bat-Signals,

A lot of people have been writing to you lately to comment on how good the covers of BATMAN have been. Every Batman cover I've seen has indeed been excellent. For instance, the cover of BATMAN #486 was superb. The way Batman was gliding over Black Mask made a terrific effect. Also, the buildings were drawn with such detail that you wouldn't think anyone would put so much effort into one cover.

You should make a comics series with just Robin in it.

Matthew Minehan
Padstow Heights, N.S.W.
Australia

It is never too late to thank Michael Golden for not only rendering many of the past year's too-outstanding-to-believe covers but for also coloring them in his inimitable and unparalleled style. Michael is taking a break from doing our covers for a while (translation: writing in and demand his return), but we think we found a couple of guys to fill the void he has left. The first was newcomer Travis Charest whose work graced the cover of this issue and graces the interior of THE DARKSTARS each and every month. Let me know if you want to see more of him around these parts. As you probably already realized, next up on cover duty is Kelley Jones. (Did I say—write, type—Kelley Jones? You!)

Dear Scott,

There is no doubt in my mind: that old Moench charm is coming back. BATMAN #486 was an excellent issue. I'm now certain that only good things will be coming to this title.

Doug wrote an interesting story, equal to the great stories he wrote some years back in BATMAN. While Metalhead isn't exactly, uh, top villain material, he presented yet another new challenge for the Batman to oppose. The continuing story with Black Mask also looks to be great. I like the way that this comic is developing one big story arc through each issue's self-contained stories.

Doug's interpretation of the Batman in this issue was quite well done. This Batman reminds me of the one from Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's "A Lonely Place of Dying." This is a Batman who is determined to stop crime at all costs, a Batman who is willing to inflict upon himself all sorts of torture.

Alfred's talk with Tim Drake was also brilliant on Doug's part. While Doug doesn't employ Tim Drake as actively as Chuck Dixon does, he does tell us about Tim's relationship with his dad while also giving us some compelling scenes of him in the Batcave.

I really hope that this keeps up, because BATMAN is returning to greatness. It will be good to see how Batman recuperates from his battle with Metalhead next issue.

The look of Jim Aparo's art/lettering combination also brought this comic back to a golden (or silver) age. This comic may not look as modern as SHADOW OF THE BAT, but I think that the classic look works. In fact, it works incredibly. Jim will always be the Batman artist to beat. While I greatly enjoy Norm Breyfogle's work—he's about tied with Jim—Jim's look defined Batman in the first place, and always will. The rendition of Robin is the only thing I have a slight problem with. Jim is perfectly able to draw Grayson or Todd, but his Drake doesn't look as good as, say, Tom Lyle's or Norm's does. Aside from that, the art was perfect. Jim draws the definitive Alfred.

The covers of late have been excellent. The only improvement would be a new logo.

Joey Marchese
Union, NJ

Yeah, Jim does draw the definitive Alfred, doesn't he? I also think he draws a one-of-a-kind, hilarious Sergeant Bullock.

The only problem with the logo I can possibly come up with is that it (unavoidably) masks part of our gorgeous covers. But that, as they say, is comicbiz. People have to know what they are buying.

Dear Batman and Robin,

I really liked issue #486. Batman, why don't you use Robin more often to help fight? I, myself, like Batman, but my little brother really likes Robin. I watch

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BOB ROZAKIS, Production Director

Batman: The Animated Series every day. I've not missed one episode except one. I hope you find Black Mask. Me and my friend talk about you all the time. His name is Jeff.

Steve Erriman
Smithville, TN



Denny and Scott,

BATMAN #486 was terrifying.

I've never seen Batman so obsessed, so intense, not even in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. This issue was another chapter in the continuing Black Mask storyline, and I thank Doug Moench for giving this title what it needed—a real story of more than two parts.

As I said before, Batman was actually scary in this issue, more of an inhuman machine serving justice than the intelligent crime-fighter he normally is. Everyone goes off the deep end once in a while, but when someone as stoic and unemotional as the Batman takes that leap...

I've really been enjoying Jim Aparo's work since he started inking it himself. I don't like to shoot off my big mouth, because I can't ink worth a darn, but I disliked Mike DeCarlo's work on this title. He made Jim's figures stiff, his backgrounds stale.

Before I go, I heartily agree with Justin Weddle in the lettercol—let's see an entire issue photographed by Tom Taggart. Also, let's see GOTHAM NIGHTS II.

Mike Leonard
Cherry Tree, PA

John Ostrander and Mary Mitchell are hard at work creating GOTHAM NIGHTS II. Believe you me, it is worth the wait!

Your comments about Jim's art raise an interesting subject. In Jim's long and illustrious illustrating career, his pencils have, to my knowledge, been inked by only two people other than himself—Frank Giacoia and Mike DeCarlo. I know for a fact that some of the best inkers in the business have long yearned for a crack at inking an issue of Jim Aparo. I put it to you readers—should Denny and I invite some of them to finally do so?



Dear Bat-Signals,

I have just recently started reading your comics and I must say that out of the few I have read, BATMAN #486, "Metalhead," was a definite number one! We finally get to see Batman when he is not the absolutely perfect person. We also get to see a growing friendship between Alfred and Robin.

Now for some questions. Why did the first Robin (Dick Grayson) become Nightwing? How did the second Robin (Jason Todd) get killed by the Joker? Finally, how did Batman find the third Robin (Tim Drake)?



Thanks very much for providing me with great comics every two weeks. Keep 'em coming.

Heather Derflinger
Linthicum, MD

Heather is one of only two females to write us this month. While she is certainly a terrific representative of female Bat-fans everywhere, I would like to hear from some others, too! Whaddya say?

To answer your questions in order, Heather:

1. Dick Grayson struck out on his own after Batman, citing the inherent dangers involved for someone so young to be fighting crime, forbade him to continue being Robin. Dick left him and co-founded the New Titans. Eventually he created his Nightwing identity to further separate himself from his former mentor.

2. Jason Todd died trying to save his mother from the Joker's bomb.

3. Batman did not find Tim Drake, Tim Drake found Batman, by way of Dick Grayson.

To learn more, check out the trade paperbacks **A DEATH IN THE FAMILY** and **A LONELY PLACE OF DYING**, which collect the full stories chronicling Jason's untimely death and Tim's rise to Robinhood.



Dear Editor,

The only thing I disliked about BATMAN #488 was the cover. It must have been the result of poor planning. When Batman is in a swell fight scene, you should not show him with his back to the "camera." Takes all the impact out of the scene.

The issue should once again quiet those who say that Doug Moench writes a "wimpy" Batman. The version we see here is intense to the point where we can see the tongues of flame coming out of his ears and mouth.

Allow me to add something to Alfred's armchair psychology. If Batman's reason for establishing his career was to avenge the death of his parents, then he should have been able to find some measure of peace after Joe Chill was caught and punished for his crimes. But he didn't. I reason that this is because he feels he failed to protect his parents when he was a child—hence, his obsession in this issue and others with "failure" (or presumed failure). So, he goes out every night, the same scene replaying over and over in his mind, determined that this time he'll "succeed."

When I first saw Metalhead, I thought, "Moench and Aparo have been seeing too many Clive Barker movies. I'll bet his real first name is Spike." But I would like to see him again. That suit of his, despite Batman's victory, turned out to be a near-perfect anti-Batman weapon. Rule Number One is not to let Batman get in close quarters with you.

Also, this guy's got excellent long-distance weaponry and a very nasty attitude. And when you get right down to it, Metalhead was the smart one to go home and get some sleep.

Now, a suggestion. The Superman titles are doing great business with the "Baldy Awards." So, may I suggest a similar award for Batman lettercols—the Harvey Award. If you like the letter, you send half the award. And if you like another letter written by the same person, you send them the other half of the award.

Charles D. Brown
Brentwood, NY

Don't push your luck, Chuck.

Dear Denny and Scott,

I just read "Metalhead" for the third time. I felt that there was something special about this issue, that it was one of those rare, more-than-excellent comics.

The cover, for starters, is a corker, the action taking place in an eerie nighttime graveyard, drawn as only Jim Aparo can draw graveyards. Doug Moench and Jim truly excelled on this one—what a writer/artist team! The large upper panel on page three, showing Metalhead's dramatic first appearance in the dingy, sleazy, smoke-filled underworld haunt, is absolutely stupendous and has maximum dramatic effect. This is what all Batman comics should be like.

Metalhead is quite an original villain, with his black figure, spiky head and barbed lash fixed to the top of his head. He has a striking appearance. Jim Aparo draws a sharp, tough and dynamic Batman. He's recognized as one of the best professional comics artists for good reason. Doug Moench writes a stressed-out, realistic Batman who bleeds and feels pain. One moment he's exhausted, then suddenly he doesn't feel tired anymore. Great stuff. Keep it coming.

John Miller
Edinburgh, Scotland

"Striking appearance"—ha ha ha! I get it! And you thought Jim Aparo draws a "sharp" Batman! Hee hee hee!



Dear Bat-Signals,

Metalhead is a very cool character for Batman to beat up on.

I want to know why he hates comedians.

Batman is one of my favorite superheroes and always has been.

I have one complaint—Tim Drake a.k.a. Robin. Get rid of him some way. Kill him, make him move to another country, do something!

Long live Batman!

Leonora Vuser-Schutz
New York, NY

P.S. More Catwoman, please!

I hope I never get on Leonora's bad side!



Dear Bat Mail,

I'm a first-time writer. I never wrote before because I thought the odds against me were too great. I hope I can make it into the comics. I thought BATMAN #488, "Metalhead," was terrific. I enjoyed seeing the true obsessive nature of the Batman in this issue. When will Clayface and Riddler appear in the series?

Stephen Smith
Cincinnati, OH

Hope you enjoyed seeing a completely different Riddler than we have ever seen before in our last issue, Stephen. Clayface? Ah yes, Clayface, heh heh heh...

The odds of getting printed are "great," though not "against" you, Stephen. Nevertheless, you should not be deceived by how "easy" you got into this lettercol. I'm being a big softy this issue, this being my first time at Bat (Signals). Next issue I am going to get a lot tougher. Yeah!

Right now, though, I am going to have my dinner, some of Charles D. Brown's aforementioned "tongues of flame"—in a lovely tomato sauce, just like my Nana used to make. Yum!

MTGGFLF,
Jordan B. Gorfinkel
—It was just a scratch!

Say, did I happen to mention that we have big plans for Batman this year? BIG plans!

SPECIAL PLUG: If you have not yet picked up **BATMAN: SEDUCTION OF THE GUN**, please do so. This one-shot special (no pun intended) has garnered a lot of unexpected but well-deserved media attention because of its timely, frank treatment of a very serious and sensitive subject, teenage gun abuse. It is written by John Ostrander of **GOTHAM NIGHTS** fame and drawn by Vince Giarrano, artist of the latest story arc in **SHADOW OF THE BAT**. It is undoubtedly the most powerful storytelling of the year. (A special letters section responding to **SEDUCTION** will appear soon in **Bat-Signals**.)

IN DETECTIVE "Prelude to Knightfall," begun here in **BATMAN**, continues. Two of Gotham's wealthiest businessmen are dead and Lucius Fox will follow unless Batman, Robin and Azrael can intervene in time! It's a race against the clock in **DETECTIVE COMICS** #658 by Chuck "Buzz" Dixon, Michael Netzer and Scott Hanna.

IN THE SHADOW looms the psychopath Kadaver. He is dying and plans to take Gotham with him! And just what is the Human Flea? Alan Grant, Vince Giarrano and Tiger the Dog's flea powder tell all in **SHADOW OF THE BAT** #11.

IN ADVENTURES, Killer Croc takes on the only man ever to beat him—the hired muscle of the gangster Batman wants to take down! **THE BATMAN ADVENTURES** #7 is brought to you by Kelley Puckett, Mike Parobeck and Rick Burchett and is not to be missed. (For those of you living in the Sahara for the past six months, **THE BATMAN ADVENTURES** is a series based on the hit Fox-TV series and is the funkiest title on the comics rack. Get with the program and buy this comic!)

IN THIRTY DAYS: "Knightfall," Part One. Mad Hatter is the first of the Arkham Asylum escapees to strike...by throwing a tea party for Batman? Plus, Bane supplies all the lumps—to Film Freak's face. The gruesome turnout is in **BATMAN** #492 by Doug Moench and features a special return engagement of Norm Bryafogle!

This issue's cover was beautifully rendered by Kelley Jones and colored by Bob LeRose. Special thanks to Ann Diamant for her help with sorting this issue's mail.

